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ABSTRACT

In the emerging world of restructured schools, site-based management, and shared decision making, the traditional roles of teachers and administrators have become blurred. A central feature of this emerging world has been the development of the lead teacher--a person who continues to teach while at the same time accepting greater responsibility for assisting colleagues and the success of the overall school program. The exact function of teacher leaders is specific to individual districts, but in every case the teacher is required to assume a new relationship both with the school administration and with colleagues. The Southeastern Teacher Leadership Center (STLC) functions to help teachers as they assume their new roles as leaders. The center's philosophy, organizational structure, and program activities are described. The Leadership Seminar, offered at the beginning and end of the summer, with follow-up activities throughout the year, is central to the STLC's activities. This seminar has three main components: assessment, seminar workshops, and follow-up activities. The themes of the 4-day seminar and of the fifth and sixth days of follow-up sessions are outlined. (JD)

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The Southeastern Teacher Leadership Center:

A Program for the Development of Teacher Leaders

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The Southeastern Teacher Leadership Center

I. Purpose

Many schools in the United States have moved, or are moving, away from the 19th century model of schools as factories with principals as managers, teachers as workers, and students as raw material and with decisions made in a rigid top-down fashion. In the emerging world of restructured schools, site-based management, and shared decision-making, the traditional roles of teachers and administrators have become blurred, and both parties have had to take on new responsibilities, solve new problems, and handle traditional tasks in new, non-traditional ways. A central feature of this emerging world has been the development of the lead teacher--a person who continues to teach students while at the same time accepting greater responsibility for assisting colleagues and for the success of the overall school program. The titles and functions of these teacher leaders vary from building to building and district to district. Some act as mentors to new teachers; some as members of instructional councils or building committees; others do peer observations and peer coaching; many are involved in staff development, teach model lessons, or design curriculum; still others are team leaders or directors of houses or schools within schools. The exact function of these teacher leaders is specific to individual districts, but in each case the teacher is required to assume a new relationship both with the school administration and with his or her colleagues as he or she accepts greater responsibility as a leader. The Southeastern Teacher Leadership

Center (STLC) functions to help teachers as they assume their new roles as leaders.

II. Philosophy

The STLC operates under the following philosophy:

A. Although teachers receive considerable education in both subject matter and pedagogy, they receive little or no education in leadership. Therefore, the central component of the Center's program is leadership training.

B. Effective teacher leaders do not function as isolated individuals, but rather as members of teams which include teachers and administrators. Therefore, the Center works with school teams made up of lead teachers and at least one administrator from their building.

C. Effective programs are not produced by one-time workshops in which outside experts offer advice and training from canned programs with little or no support or follow-up. Therefore, the Center's program in leadership training includes individual assessment, a training seminar designed to accommodate the needs of an individual school, follow-up activities, and long-term support as needed.

D. Effective leaders, both teachers and administrators, are called upon to play a variety of roles within an organization, sometimes functioning as leaders of a team, other times functioning as members of a team while others assume leadership positions. Therefore, the Center provides training in the development of interpersonal skills required for success in a variety of roles.

III. Organizational Structure

The STLC is a project funded by a $166,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education to the City of Philadelphia School District and implemented by West Chester University. The focus of the STLC is the training, education, and development of teacher leaders. It is one of eight lead teacher training centers in the state and serves nearly one-third of the state's teachers who work in Philadelphia and the surrounding counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery. It is the only center that is university-based. The Southeastern Teacher Leadership Center was begun in June 1989 with a grant of $88,000 for a six month period. The grant was renewed for a second six month period beginning January 1990 and then funded for a second full year in July 1990.

Currently, the Center is staffed by a Director and eight Training Specialists, all of whom are faculty at West Chester University. The director is responsible for the overall operation of the grant and acts as liaison for the Center to West Chester University, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the School District of Philadelphia, and the other districts served by the Center. The Training Specialists assist the director in all the Center's activities and work directly with schools in conducting Leadership Seminars and related projects.

IV. Program Activities

The STLC exists to help school districts in their efforts to develop teachers as leaders. To that end, the Center offers a number of services: Technical assistance to undertake a needs

assessment, workshops on a variety of topics, help with staff development, and consultants to work with schools on specific needs. The Center also sponsors an annual conference for school superintendents on the general topic of educational leadership. The lynchpin of the Center's activities, however, is the Leadership Seminar, offered at the beginning and the end of the summer, with follow-up activities continuing throughout the academic year. The Leadership Seminar, which may be taken for three hours of graduate credit at West Chester University, has three main components: Assessment; Seminar Workshops; and Follow-up.

A. Assessment

The Semnar is offered to instructional teams of lead teachers (broadly defined) and at least one administrator from their building. The Seminar begins with an individual assessment of the participants designed to examine their executive and leadership skills and to focus attention on their roles in their schools. This assessment takes place several weeks before the main components of the Seminar in order to permit the Center staff to design the Seminar's components specifically to the needs of the participants. The assessment includes an individually administered Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator to help participants identify personal strengths. It also includes assessments in awareness of leadership characteristics, perceptions of roles, and reflection on what they hope to gain. The participants also select, from the Center's library, a book on leadership aimed at executives in the business world and are directed to come to the Seminar prepared to discuss the book and

its applicability to their leadership situations in their schools.

B. Seminar Workshops

Approximately one month after the assessment, participants come as members of instructional teams to West Chester University for a four day seminar on leadership and team building. Because each seminar is tailored to specific needs based on the individualized assessments, no two seminars are precisely alike. However, all Seminars feature workshops on leadership development and team building, and all Seminars require the participants to function as members of instructional teams while working on real-world problems specific to their own schools. Also, all Seminars involve journal writing and other reflective activities designed to help participants evaluate their own program and give feedback to the Center staff members. The following outline presents a sample of typical Seminars.

Day One Theme: Self-awareness and Personal Goal Setting

Morning Session--Individualized Leadership Styles

> Participants review the results of the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator and discuss various leadership styles.

Afternoon Session--Role Definition

> Participants work in School Instructional Teams (SITs) focusing on their roles in their schools and setting personal goals in relation to the school's long range plans.

Day Two Theme: Team Building

Morning Session--Book Sharing

> Participants discuss the books on leadership they read after the Assessment, focusing on the applicability of the book's insights to their school situations as

members of the SITs.

Morning Session--Team Building I

Participants view a film on team building and receive instruction on the stages in developing group cohesion. The film and instruction is discussed in SITs.

Afternoon Session--Team Building II

Participants engage in Team Tower Building activity and discuss team development, focusing on individual styles and roles in developing groups into goal oriented teams.

Afternoon Session--Networking

Participants divide by job function with administrators from several schools meeting together in small groups to discuss common problems and share ideas, while teachers do likewise.

Day Three Theme: Planning and Leadership

Morning Session--Organizational Planning

Participants work in SITs on long range planning: developing a vision, establishing goals; setting priorities; establishing timelines; managing by objectives; etc.

Afternoon Session--Project Management

Participants discuss specific tasks as leaders of projects within larger organizations, focusing on the role of the manager in developing a new program.

Afternoon Session--Leadership Characteristics

Participants review the results of assessment activity, focusing on recognition of leadership skills and discussing qualities of effective leaders.

Day Four Theme: Implementation

Morning Session--Meeting Skills

Participants focus on skills required for effective leadership in conducting meetings, e.g. assertive, but non-threatening, communication; establishing meaningful agendas; chairing participatory meetings; etc.

Afternoon Session--Consensus Building

Participants engage in consensus building activities and work on steps for achieving consensus as part of the School Instructional Team.

One goal of the four day Seminar is to develop the School Instructional Teams into functioning teams with a plan for the coming academic year.

C. Follow-up Sessions

The fifth day of the Seminar takes place in October, seven or eight weeks after the beginning of the school year. The follow-up session has two general purposes: first, to give the participants an additional workshop on a topic of their choice, and second, to give the participants the opportunity to discuss needs and develop strategies with the Center staff, based on their experiences of the first two months of the school year. This enables the Center to design specific follow-up activities for individual schools throughout the remaining academic year. It also enables the Seminar participants to share experiences and network with other teacher leaders and administrators.

Between the fifth and sixth day of the Seminar, members of the Center staff visit individual schools, conduct workshops, and work with Seminar participants as needed.

The sixth day of the Seminar takes place near the end of the spring semester. It also has a dual purpose: first, to give participants an additional workshop on a topic of their choice, and second, to enable the participants to network with one another, share ideas, and develop plans for the future.

V. Results

The STLC has conducted four Seminars, one in the summer of 1989 and three during the summer of 1990, and has had 140 Seminar participants. Instructional teams from twenty-five middle schools and one high school from the School District of Philadelphia have attended, along with teams from two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school--representing a complete district--from Chester County. The total number of students served by these schools is over 18,000.

A detailed survey of results is currently underway; the findings will be analyzed and available in the summer of 1991. A summary of preliminary measures can be reported here: first, a survey of 1989 Seminar participants done by the School District of Philadelphia; second, a survey of how all 140 participants perceived their own skill development at the conclusion of the four day Seminar component; third, some preliminary findings from the survey now underway; and fourth, anecdotal evidence gathered by STLC staff in working with participating schools in follow-up activities.

A survey of participating schools was conducted by the School District of Philadelphia. Items included the impact of the Center on leadership teams, frustration in implementing concepts and practices, type of follow-up support needed, suggestions for future training, and overall comments.

The results indicated that the Center had improved leadership skills, problem-solving skills, and morale of participants. The Center had also promoted positive action in the schools, better planning, and an increase in shared decision-

making. The only reported frustrations centered on structural conditions such as reductions in teacher allocations for particular buildings or the movement of people to different locations--conditions which prevented participants from exercising their new skills to the fullest. Participants praised the Center and requested continued Center involvement with their schools. Participants also gave strong support to the Center's philosophy of working with instructionaal teams. Respondents from Philadelphia also strongly recommended that all teacher leaders in the District have the opportunity to participate in Center activities. Administrators from five of the ten schools in the first Seminar sent additional instructional teams to later ones.

A survey conducted by the STLC of Seminar participants at the conclusion of the four day components asked that they reflect on changes within themselves as a result of the Seminar activities. The survey instrument employed a Likert Scale from one to five, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, and contained 46 statements related to leadership. This data is currently being analyzed and final results are unavailable at this time. Preliminary analysis, however, indicates the following results. 100% of the participants reported positive influences from the Seminar. In the self-evaluation done as part of the assessment activity before the Seminar, 88% of the participants indicated lack of awareness of leadership styles, and 75% expressed doubts about their knowledge of how to carry our their leadership roles. All participants reported increased awareness of leadership styles, increased confidence in ability

to relate better to colleagues with different leadership styles, and increased confidence in their ability to use new skills to perform their leadership roles. Among the most fequently reported changes were increased skills in conducting and managing an effective meeting, increased skills in time management, and increased ability to identify and prioritize critical issues relating to the leadership position.

An additional measure of the Center's impact is provided by early responses to the current survey of the participants as they evaluate their effectiveness as leaders in their schools and the impact they have been able to make on improving school structure and/or climate. One important result has been the reported increase in both the number of meetings and the effectiveness of these meetings conducted by the instructional leaders who participated in the Seminar. All the participants report that they are applying or intend to apply plans developed in SITs in their schools, but schools report frustrations at lack of time to institutionalize SITs in their school buildings. One group of teacher leaders reported their decision to continue SIT meetings outside regular work hours.

A related result of the first year of the Center was the development of a job description for the position of House Director (a type of lead teacher) in the School District of Philadelphia. This description, developed by the participants themselves with assistance from Center staff, provides a framework for the general title while allowing room for interpretation by individual schools. This job description

represents a major step toward the goal of site-based management as it grew from a need expressed and met by the house directors themselves, rather than the central office. Participants also formed a House Directors' Organization which has met to discuss issues associated with that leadership position.

A major result of the Seminar reported by the Center staff in conducting follow-up activities with the schools has been the increased professionalism of the teachers who have attended. For example, participants form one school have made presentations at three regional conferences. Another school will have six participants at a regional conference in 1991. As another example, participants from three schools have taken a leadership role in developing collaborative efforts with West Chester University in the area of teacher pre-service education. Participants have also reported to Center staff that they have increased their use of Center techniques in teaching their classes, e.g. more collaborative learning, small group, discussion, etc.

An unforeseen result that has been reported by the central office of the School District of Philadelphia is that several participatory schools have taken leadership positions in the District's restructuring effort toward site-based management because of the changes that have occurred in those schools since the instructional teams attended the Seminars.

VI. Conclusions

As the restructuring of American education gathers momentum it is imperative that the leaders of change come from the ranks of those who will bear the brunt of those changes. The activities of the Southeastern Teacher Leadership Center show that teachers and administrators can learn to share leadership responsibilities and work in an interactive manner to facilitate positive changes.